

SUGGESTIONS

ON THE BEST MEANS OF SUPPLYING

Anatomical Schools,

WITH OPPORTUNITY OF STUDYING PRACTICAL ANATOMY AND
SURGERY,

IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO

THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT MELBOURNE,

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT.

BY

J. EVANS RIADORE, Esq., F.L.S. &c. &c.

LECTURER ON SURGERY.

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1831.

SUGGESTIONS,

&c.

MY LORD,

MUCH regretting the lately transpired and horrible system of supplying Anatomical Schools with subjects, I trust that I may be allowed to state the causes and suggestions for the prevention of a similar recurrence, by pointing out legal means of acquiring the science of Anatomy (the basis of the healing art), and by which its study may no longer be subject to the suspicions and imputations under which it now labours, but become as honorable and praiseworthy, as it is essential, to the public weal.

To effect this desirable purpose, *it is necessary* to abolish the penal statute which consigns the bodies of murderers to dissection, one of the principal causes

of the public repugnance to human dissection, by making it in the eye of the law a punishment and disgrace, and which trammels the study of Anatomy with no comparative advantage, for the supply, from this source, is *greatly* insufficient; and persons, as in life they abhor any association with such malefactors, are naturally enough unwilling that even after death their bodies should be mingled in common with theirs. The law also should be abolished which renders the possession of a dead body, after a certain period, illegal, when obtained under the regulations hereinafter specified; and it should be enacted, that the buying or selling a dead body, except under these regulations, be a crime punishable by a fine of no less than £4000, or imprisonment till paid, in order that the calling of resurrection-men may be entirely done away with, and its attendant temptation to murder, from the present exorbitant price of subjects.

I fear this high price has arisen partly from competition among the Teachers of Anatomy, and soon afterwards by competition among the resurrection-men: this led to exposure of one another's traffic, which the newspapers too zealously took up. The public became alarmed—church-yards were watched—and some resur-

rection-men met with their death in attempting to obtain subjects through the usual channels of supply, which were thus nearly closed, while the demand for and opportunity of clandestine sale remained as before, and the price of subjects increased to such an amount, that these vicious men could no longer resist the temptation of supplying them even by murder.

In my following plan, as all classes of society are equally interested in having effective medical and surgical aid, I am anxious not to make the supply of subjects dependant on any one class, and to avoid prejudicing the indigent from receiving the proffered aid of our munificent charities, or wounding the feelings of the friends of the deceased.

I propose, 1st That any person may by his will direct his body to be given up to promote the science of anatomy; and may bequeath the sum of four guineas to be paid if his body be taken for that purpose to such person as he shall think fit; and the friends or persons who have charge of the deceased, shall communicate the fact to a central police station, accompanied by a certificate of the medical attendant of the cause of death.

2^d That notice thereof shall remain for three days at the police station, where all teachers of anatomy, surgery, &c. shall exclusively apply for subjects, and if the body be not claimed in that period it shall be buried as usual.

3^d That if claimed, the rite of funeral service shall be observed in a mode similar to that of persons who die at sea, or as the deceased shall direct.

4th That all teachers of anatomy and surgery shall, on application for a body, pay four guineas to an appointed or chief officer of the police station, who shall register the particulars respecting it, and the applicant's name and address, to whom he shall give an order for removal of the body, which order, or evidence per register, shall be a sufficient indemnity for his possession of the said body, in default of which he shall forfeit the sum of £4,000 or be imprisoned till it is paid.

5th That the said sum of four guineas shall be paid free from all legal charges to the legatee of the deceased, or to his nearest relations, and in case they refuse it, or cannot be found within a year, it shall be

paid in aid of the funds of the deceased's parish, or if he died in a charitable asylum of the funds thereof.

It would be well to have in all wards of hospitals, workhouses, and similar receptacles for the poor, painted boards suspended, notifying the award of four guineas to those who by will gave their persons to promote the science of anatomy for the benefit of their fellow creatures.

Thus I am confident anatomical schools would be amply supplied without the aid of resurrection men, or wounding the feelings of the living, or being unjustly supplied from the lower classes of society only, or prejudicing them against our charitable institutions.

I have the honor to be,

MY LORD,

Your very obedient Servant,

J. EVANS RIADORE.

TAVISTOCK SQUARE,
Nov. 28th, 1831.

